



Thomas Ossel, a firefighter, was visiting Venezuela during a six-week holiday

## Briton is shot dead by gang of robbers at his holiday hotel

Girish Gupta Caracas  
Laura Dixon

A British tourist was shot dead in Venezuela as he and his brother fought a gang of robbers who had tricked their way into their hotel.

Thomas Ossel, 28, a firefighter, was shot in the jaw and his brother Jack, 21 was stabbed in the back. The robbers struck on Monday as the two were about to leave their hotel on Margarita, an island popular for its white sandy beaches. Jack Ossel was taken to hospital but later discharged.

A Venezuelan police official, Luis Garavin, told a local radio station that the gunmen were understood to have tried to rob the brothers and opened fire when they resisted.

The owner of the Posada Casa Rosa hotel, Peter Eggersdorfer, said yesterday: "It is stupid, mad, suicidal to resist a gang of robbers here when they have a gun in your face. In this situation, it's absolutely the wrong thing to do. I am very sad, though, that this boy's life ended like this."

He said that the gang tricked him into letting them into the hotel to see a room. "Four people asked if there was availability. I opened the door and seconds later one pulled a gun and shouted 'This is a robbery'," he said.

Mr Eggersdorfer, 48, was hit over the head with a pistol then held in the kitchen with other guests as an armed group went through the rooms, fighting with guests. "I heard four shots, one of which killed Thomas Ossel," he said. "The robbers fled in a car waiting by the back door."

The men's father, Ben, arrived in Venezuela yesterday. Jacqueline Baxter, a family friend, said that Thomas was a "real adventurer". She added: "I spoke to Jack last night. He has been coping remarkably well. I am sure it will hit him when he comes home."

Paul Wynne, a friend who recently

bought a house with Thomas in Bedford, said: "Tom was one of those people who could never sit still for more than five minutes. He always wanted to see how other countries worked."

He said that the brothers were very close and had previously travelled to Trinidad and Tobago. They had been due to travel on to Colombia as the next stop of their six-week holiday. "Tom was very protective over his friends and especially his brother," Mr Wynne said. "He would have wanted to protect Jack out there."

Thomas had written on his MySpace page: "Have been to nearly 40 countries now... would love to make it 100 one day!" He described himself as a



Liverpool FC fan and a keen cook and travel photographer.

His colleagues at the London Fire Brigade were said to be shocked. "It is terrible news for the whole brigade," a spokesman said. "Really sad news."

Margarita is as a luxury resort. Colonel Muammar Gaddafi stayed there with President Chávez of Venezuela in 2009. However, its reputation as a destination for the wealthy has attracted trouble. Mr Ossel is the third foreign tourist to have been killed there this year.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office warns in its travel advice that street crime in Venezuela is high and that armed muggings and kidnappings are regular occurrences.

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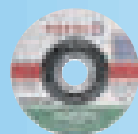
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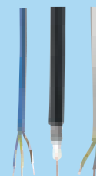
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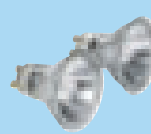
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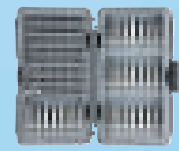
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